

Consolidated Staffing Unit (CSU)



Applicant Guide

August 2006



This document addresses some frequently asked questions, pointers on how to maximize consideration for positions, issues to avoid in the application process, and some reference tools that may assist you in your endeavors to switch positions or promote within the Bureau. In evaluating this document, we hope you will gain a better understanding of what is required to be submitted, the importance of the information submitted, and how you can maximize your application.



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Frequently Asked Questions



I hear I don't have to type those long Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs). How's this a benefit to me?

KSAs are now broken out into automated responses, based upon a variety of assessment tools. Therefore, human judgment is removed when reading KSAs, resulting in consistently applied ratings from individual to individual.

How are BQ lists developed? Can the CSU do whatever they want?

Best Qualified (BQ) groups are definitively identified. There is a set formula on how BQ lists are identified and there is no deviation from the system. This provides for a fair and consistent method of forwarding the truly best qualified candidates from the qualified candidates.

Why did we adopt the BOP-Careers System?

BOP-Careers is a streamlined, fair, and more consistent application, rating, and ranking system for applicants. In addition, it falls in line with the intent of OMB initiatives, as well as, the Merit System Principles. It provides access to staff 24 hours a day and applicants can apply on line from home, their local library, café, etc. You may apply anywhere with an Internet connection.

Why should staff feel comfortable with the system?

Applicants can feel confident in a fair and impartial system of evaluation. The CSU is a remote site with no direct ties or vested interest to any one location. It is required to follow all personnel rules and regulations and is subject to oversight and auditing to ensure compliance. It is designed to streamline functions for the field and for you. Like anything new, there is a transition. Most staff, who have applied to several jobs, really like the system. If you have a well-prepared résumé in USAJOBS, it takes very little time to apply to subsequent vacancies.

What if I don't understand the process or get confused along the way?

Help is available either by phone or email. Help is provided in understanding the system, and how to process applications and résumés. However, help is not provided in how you should answer a particular question in any way that would provide one applicant with an advantage over another. Assistance from the CSU can be obtained by calling (972) 352-4200 or sending an email to GRA-HRM/Consolidated Staffing Unit (GroupWise) or GRA-HRM/ConsolidatedStaffingUnit@bop.gov.

Brochures, pamphlets, and protocols have been forwarded to each institution or component. Local ESDs have information available for distribution that may also assist you. Additionally, applicant guides are available at www.bop.gov, under the Careers tab in the Related Documents box or in Sallyport under the Links tab, Employee Resources, in the Career Opportunity section.

How important is the résumé?

Critical. The résumé plays a critical role in the application process. First of all, it is utilized in conjunction with your responses to determine your qualifications. Secondly, if you make BQ, it is forwarded to the selecting official for review along with all other résumés on the BQ list. Therefore, your résumé should be thorough and document your Bureau history and any outside experience that is applicable toward the job for which you are applying. The résumé could be the difference between qualifying and not qualifying or could mean the difference between being selected over another candidate or not.

If I am missing something with my application, will someone call me and let me know?

No. Each applicant is responsible for following the instructions as outlined in the vacancy announcements and answering all applicant questions related to the vacancy. In order to ensure no applicant is treated differently than another, individual exceptions are not provided. The unit does have phone and email assistance available for questions and brochures and pamphlets are also available to assist applicants. With automated processing, application responses can be changed by any applicant up to 11:59 p.m. EST of the closing date. Applicant data is not reviewed until after the position closes.

Can I save my application for one position and use it for another?

You can save a copy of your résumé for future use. You can also save up to five résumés in the USAJOBS system. If you have multiple résumés you can tailor them for the jobs for which you are interested. You cannot however, save an entire electronic application and resubmit it.

How often can I update my résumé?

You can update your résumé at any time. In USAJOBS, you can save up to as many as five résumés. You may also update your résumé and/or application up until 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), of the closing date of the vacancy announcement.

How specific do I need to be when detailing my qualifications?

You need to be as specific as possible. Remember, your answers to the narrative specialized experience question and your résumé is what is going to determine whether you are qualified. Your responses should contain your core duties and be specific in nature. If the duties were performed on a part-time basis, you **MUST** indicate the number of hours and length of time the duties were conducted. The more specific the better. In addition, the selecting official will be reviewing your résumé. It is an opportunity to sell yourself as a viable candidate for selection.

Do I need my last SF-50 and performance evaluation when applying under BOP-Careers?

No. BOP-Careers eliminates the need for paper with the exception of education/transcripts, licensures, and other documents specific to a particular vacancy announcement. The vacancy announcement will identify any documents that need to be sent separate from the electronic system. Otherwise, most positions can be handled simply through the automation process itself.

I have made BQ every time I put in for this type of position. Why was I not found to be BQ this time?

Each merit promotion board consists of different numbers of candidates, variations in the quality of candidates, and variations to each applicant's score. It is possible to be found BQ for a position one time and not make BQ for the same job under another announcement. *The number of candidates and the scores of candidates vary from job to job. This is why you may not always make BQ.*

I responded to all the KSAs and selected choice #1 for each element. This means I scored the highest score possible for each KSA right ?

No. The selection choices for KSA responses each have a different numeric value. Selecting #1 does not necessarily mean that was the highest level for that KSA. The highest level may have been selection #2, #3, etc. The KSA choices are randomly listed. Some are high, medium, or low scoring range. Should the applicant possess experience similar, but not exact, to those listed, applicants may select the “similar experience” answer choice and **MUST** provide a narrative response. Answering the narrative question with “All of the above,” is unacceptable and will result in your answer choice being changed to “None of the above.”

If I apply for a promotion to a job in the same series I currently hold, I don't have to be specific with my paperwork do I? I automatically qualify, correct?

No. The applicant is responsible for providing detailed information regarding how they qualify for a position. Therefore, *each application must specifically identify enough information in order to determine whether you qualify based upon specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade. The applicant's résumé should provide that detailed information.*

I am applying for a wage grade position. Do I need to identify my experience on my résumé or is answering the KSAs enough?

Yes, for verification purposes. Wage grade applicants qualify based upon their KSA responses. Applicants, however, must list in their résumé detailed information on how their experience was gained. Applicants should list the job, the time frames, and the duties in the body of the résumé. Remember, the résumé is what the selecting official is going to be looking at for selection.

How do I know what you are looking for in qualifications ?

In each vacancy announcement, there is a description of some benchmarks/examples of the types of experience that are being sought. This outlined experience is relative to the position, the position description, and qualification standards handbook. All these things are generally available to the applicant. You have the vacancy, standardized PD's are available for review in Sallyport under the Resources tab, and the Qualifications Handbook is available at www.opm.gov. The Handbook is also referenced in the vacancy announcement. These tools may assist you in 1) identifying whether you have the required experience, 2) identifying any education or minimum qualifications required and, 3) serving as an excellent tool when developing your résumé.

If a position has an educational requirement, do I have to submit transcripts each time I apply?

Yes. If the position has a positive education requirement or minimum education requirement, the applicant must submit transcripts to verify they meet the basic qualifications for the position. Once this determination is made, the specialized experience requirements are then reviewed. Applicants should maintain an official copy of their transcripts. CSU will accept a copy of the transcript.

For example, I'm a Case Manager and I want to apply for a CMC position. Do I need to submit my transcripts? Yes. The 101 series has a basic or minimum education requirement. The education requirement has to be verified before a determination is made as to whether you meet the time in grade and specialized experience requirements.

What positions do applicants have the most trouble with?

The most common problem identified for any position is a failure to provide enough detailed information related to the job in order to determine an applicant's qualifications.

When I fill out my résumé, I run out of characters in the first section. Is it possible to expand the characters available ?

No. But, there is an easy fix. When completing your résumé, you can outline your duties under the first field. If you run out space, just add a second employment field and continue on.

I have some credits toward a degree but have not obtained my B.A. Should I ever submit transcripts for a job?

If the position allows for education to be creditable toward qualifying for a position or a combination of education and experience, yes. Generally, the vacancy announcement will identify when combinations of education and/or experience can be utilized. Sometimes, if you come up short on experience, the education you did complete can be prorated and utilized toward qualifications as well.

For instance, I want to apply to a Employee Services Specialist position at the GS-05 level. The qualifications for a GS-05 are a 4 year degree or 3 years of general experience. I only have 1-1/2 years of general experience related to the job (50% of what is required). But, I have an Associates Degree. That degree meets ½ the educational requirement (50%). The combination of the two meets the 100% necessary to qualify for the job. So yes, partial transcripts can be beneficial to an applicant.

Open Continuous

How often can I update my Open Continuous paperwork?

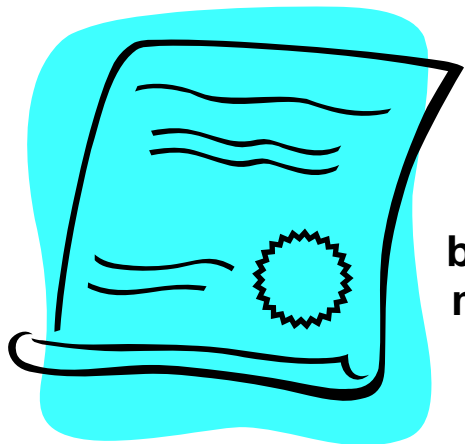
You can go back into the system and update your paperwork at any time. This includes updating awards information, performance evaluation information, changing your KSA responses, or updating your résumé. You can change information daily if you like. What you do need to watch out for are the cut-off dates that are established. For instance, if June 15, 2006, is a cut-off date all changes entered prior to June 15, 2006, will be reflected when Open Continuous boards are pulled. If you make changes after June 15, 2006, the changes will not be reflected until the July cut-off dates when boards are pulled for that monthly cut-off. So changes can be made anytime, but, you must be cognizant of your cut-off dates in case they will affect when your action(s) take effect.

I want to remove duty locations from my Lieutenant or Captain's paperwork. How do I do that?

Just send an email to the GRA-HRM/Consolidated Staffing Unit mailbox indicating the location and under which vacancy announcement you would like removed from consideration.

Is it true that only three names get referred on the BQ list?

No. The BQ list changes from job to job and location to location. For instance, a Captain position at a particular institution may yield more than 10 applicants on a BQ list (due to the numbers of applicants). That same position at another particular institution may only result in 5. The number of applicants and their scores will determine the BQ cut off for each job. So it will vary, and you may make BQ at one location and not at another.



**Common positions requiring
basic/minimum qualification reviews which
must be verified with transcripts each time
an applicant applies:**

Case Manager, CMC, Assistant CMC

Teacher

Contract Specialist

Accountant

Psychologist (DAP, Forensic, Chief, etc.)

Medical Officers and Nurses (Any position in the 610 series)

Other

(several other positions may also include educational requirements.
Transcripts will be noted as required in the vacancy announcement and/or
application process.)



Common Applicant Errors:

Positions in the 006 Series

Most common mistakes associated with this series:

For positions above the GS-11, there are three core areas identified under the standard. An applicant's résumé should incorporate information under all three areas. The most common area missed is item number one. Applicants at times fail to articulate how their experience impacts correctional programs and inmates. Below is the criteria outlined under the Qualifications Standards Handbook for the 006 Series.

For positions at GS-11 and above, experience must also have demonstrated the ability to perform supervisory or administrative duties successfully. This includes (1) understanding the problems of custody, treatment, training, and release of inmates of penal or correctional institutions; (2) a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of an institution's internal policies, programs, regulations, and procedures; and (3) training subordinates, coordinating and directing activities and functions, evaluating performance of operations and the effectiveness of programs, and maintaining high standards or work objectives. This experience must have been gained in an administrative position, or in other positions that included the successful direction, or assistance in the direction of, an entire correctional program or a major phase of such a program.

Most applicants who do not qualify fail to identify their role as Duty Officer and the duties associated in that area. In addition, they fail to articulate how their program area impacts correctional programs. For instance, an Employee Services Manager negotiates and tailors management initiated actions which are implemented institution-wide. These changes may impact program areas, staff working environments, or impact inmates directly or indirectly. To do this work, an individual must have knowledge of the interrelationship of correctional programs, and its affects on inmates and staff, etc.

Recreation Positions (GS-030 and GS-188)

Most common mistakes associated with this series:

I have applied for Recreation Specialist and Sports Specialist positions. How can I be qualified for one and not the other?

Depends upon how you are qualifying. Although extremely similar in function, these two positions have different qualification points. For example, if you are qualifying based upon education, a Sport Specialist is harder to qualify for than a Recreation Specialist. Below is the qualifying information for each under education:

Sports Specialist - Degree in physical education

Recreation Specialist - Degree in general recreation, outdoor recreation, recreation and parks leadership, wild land recreation management, natural resources recreation, youth recreation, public, urban, or community recreation, special populations recreation or physical education.

If you are utilizing experience, here are the differences:

Sports Specialist

General Experience (for GS-5 positions): Experience that provided a knowledge of the physical and psychological factors in individual and team sports, and the nature, purposes, and organization of recreational or competitive individual and team sports. Examples of qualifying general experience include:

Physical education specialist.

Athletic director, administrator, or coach in an educational, community, or industrial sports program.

Umpire, official, or manager of individual or team sports competitions.

Specialized Experience (for positions above GS-5): Experience that demonstrated the ability to:

Plan, supervise, administer, or carry out a sports program that includes a variety of individual and team sports; and

Guide participants in developing the skills needed for participation in sports activities and to teach the techniques of various sports.

Examples of qualifying specialized experience include:

Managing or administering a sports program in a community, industrial activity, or secondary school or college.

Planning, teaching, or evaluating a physical education curriculum for secondary or higher academic levels.

Managing, umpiring, or officiating at amateur or professional athletic events, competitions, or games.

Recreation Specialist

General Experience (for GS-5 positions): Experience that provided a knowledge of the goals, principles, methods, and techniques of recreation and an understanding of the interests of individuals or groups.

Specialized Experience (for positions above GS-5): Experience that demonstrated the ability to apply the principles of one or more specialty areas of recreation. Examples of qualifying specialized experience include:

Planning, organizing, coordinating, supervising, or evaluating community, industrial, outdoor, institutional, or other recreational programs.

Planning, establishing, or evaluating a recreational curriculum for junior college or higher academic levels.

Instructing in the principles and techniques of recreational program planning and management.

Serving in a leadership role in the programs and activities of local, regional, and/or national recreational organizations.

Case Management (GS-101) (Case Manager, Assistant CMC, CMC)

Most common mistakes associated with this series:

Failure to supply transcripts
Applicants not meeting the Basic Education Requirements

The basic requirements needed under the 101 series are:

Degree: that included at least 24 semester hours of course work in the behavioral or social sciences.

OR

Combination of education and experience--that included at least 24 semester hours of course work in the behavioral or social sciences, and that provided applicants with knowledge of the behavioral or social sciences equivalent to a 4-year degree as shown above.

Evaluation of Education: Courses such as sociology, correctional administration, criminal justice, government/political science, psychology, social work, counseling, and other related social or behavioral science courses may be used to satisfy the 24-semester-hour requirement.

Graduate education must have been in corrections or a related field such as criminal justice, sociology, psychology, counseling, social work, or other course work related to the position.

Plus any specialized experience as identified in the vacancy announcement.

Accountant (all positions under 510 series)

Most common mistakes associated with this series:

Failure to supply transcripts

Meeting the minimum course work necessary

Failure to identify higher level accounting work versus technical work for specialized experience

Basic Requirements:

Degree: accounting or a degree in a related field such as business administration, finance, or public administration that included or was supplemented by 24 semester hours in accounting. The 24 hours may include up to 6 hours of credit in business law. (The term "accounting" means "accounting and/or auditing" in this standard. Similarly, "accountant" should be interpreted, generally, as "accountant and/or auditor.")

OR

Combination of education and experience--at least 4 years of experience in accounting, or an equivalent combination of accounting experience, college-level education, and training that provided professional accounting knowledge. The applicant's background must also include *one* of the following:

A. Twenty-four semester hours in accounting or auditing courses of appropriate type and quality. This can include up to 6 hours of business law;

B. A certificate as Certified Public Accountant or a Certified Internal Auditor, obtained through written examination; or

A. Completion of the requirements for a degree that included substantial course work in accounting or auditing, e.g., 15 semester hours, but that does not fully satisfy the 24-semester-hour requirement of paragraph A, provided that (a) the applicant has successfully worked at the full-performance level in accounting, auditing, or a related field, e.g., valuation engineering or financial institution examining; (b) a panel of at least two higher level professional accountants or auditors has determined that the applicant has demonstrated a good knowledge of accounting and of related and underlying fields that equals in breadth, depth, currency, and level of advancement that which is normally associated with successful completion of the 4-year course of study described in

paragraph A; and except for literal nonconformance to the requirement of 24 semester hours in accounting, the applicant's education, training, and experience fully meet the specified requirements.

Plus any specialized experience as identified in the vacancy announcement.

Contract Specialist (GS-1102)

Most common mistakes associated with this series:

Pro-rating time associated with contracting functions
Meeting the minimum education requirement

Basic Requirements for GS-5 through GS-12

1. A 4 year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree with a major in any field;

OR

2. At least 24 semester hours in any combination of the following fields: accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and management.

Plus any specialized experience as identified in the vacancy announcement.

Teacher, Assistant SOE, SOE (GS-1710)

Most common mistakes associated with this series:

Failure to supply transcripts

Failure to identify outside teaching experience in the résumé

Basic Requirements needed under the 1710 Teaching Series are:

For Teaching Positions:

Degree: that included or was supplemented by supervised student teaching, and at least one course in each of the following areas: general psychology, human development, history and/or philosophy of education, and teaching methods at the learning level of the position to be filled, i.e., elementary or secondary learning level. For secondary school teaching positions, applicants must also have had at least 24 semester hours (or the equivalent) of course work in each of the principal fields of instruction.

OR

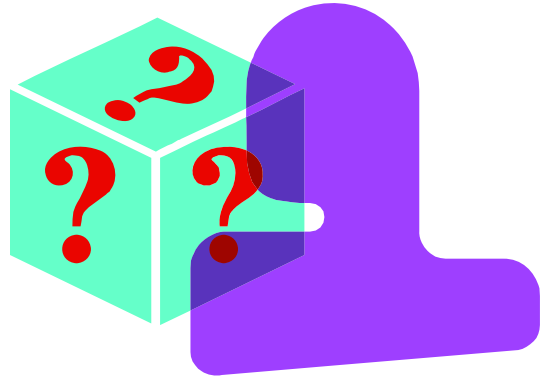
Combination of education and experience--Applicants who have completed a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's degree but who do not meet the specific course requirements shown above meet minimum qualification requirements if they have completed at least 1 full academic year of professional teaching experience at the elementary or secondary school level as appropriate to the position to be filled. Professional teaching experience is defined as full and primary responsibility for the instruction of assigned students under general supervision in a recognized or accredited school or institution. This includes responsibility for preparation and presentation of lessons and the evaluation of students' progress throughout the learning period, including a determination of the students' success or failure according to established criteria.

OR

Combination of education and National Teacher Examination (NTE) scores--Applicants who have completed a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's degree but who do not meet the specific course requirements shown above meet minimum qualification requirements if they have obtained a score of 660 in each of the NTE core examinations and any specialty area examinations appropriate to the position to be filled.

Plus any specialized experience as identified in the vacancy announcement.

How Do I Qualify.....



While the KSA questions give you points for your accomplishments, you must first qualify for the position based on the Qualification Standards determined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), before they can be considered in your application.

Qualifying experience is based on what you provide in your résumé. Never assume that your job title gives the rater a pre-determined description for the job. It is important that you give a detailed outline regarding your duties. Note: The individual reviewing your application must examine it based upon what you submit. They can not infer or assume something that is not present. They must develop a nexus to how you qualify based upon the content you provide and ensure it is justified under the qualification standards.

How do you know what experience is required to qualify?

Carefully read and study the vacancy announcements.

- The “Major Duties” section will give you what the job you are applying for entails—what will be expected of you.
- In the “Qualifications” section, you will be told exactly what the requirements are, and examples of education and/or any experience that is necessary. At the end of qualifications, there is a hyper-link where you can click and be transferred to the OPM Website that is appropriate for that job series.

These identifiers will provide you with the type of information the rater will be looking for.



Describing Work Experience:

Usually, you want to start with your most recent job, but if prior work experience is more relevant, it may be to your advantage to start with that first. Include your job title, company and address, dates of employment, salary, hours worked per week, and your supervisor with a phone number. **For each position, write about your duties and accomplishments as they relate to the duties and requirements listed in the particular vacancy or vacancies for similar positions.**

List jobs in reverse chronological order. Make sure you include correct dates of employment and job titles. Describe your duties, especially detailing the areas that will help you to qualify for the position to which you are applying.

Remember, what you list on your résumé is what the selecting official will be reviewing. It may be to your advantage to have a well detailed description of your entire career. It could make the difference between selection and non-selection.

Specialized Experience:

Many positions announced will reference “you must have at least one year specialized experience at the next lower grade level” (some can be in combination of education and/or experience).

It is extremely important for you to provide a detailed description of duties and experience as it relates to the job you are performing and any relational duties you are performing relevant to the position to be filled. For instance, let's say you are putting in for a Public Affairs position. You are currently a CMC and you outline all your basic CMC duties and note that you serve as the alternate PIO. Well, that doesn't help much in crossing to another job series. However, detailing the CMC duties, expanding on relational items such as; preparing congressional responses, contacting and communicating with external agencies, responding to information requests under the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act, and outlining the specific duties you performed as the alternate PIO would assist an individual in crossing the job series. These duties are relational to the position to be filled. This is just an example of tailoring your paperwork.

It is also important that when you answer the question pertaining to how you qualify, you provide a detailed response and notate percentages and time frames for duties as applicable.



Qualification and Résumé Tips

All applications must be tailored to the position for which you are applying. It is a waste of time to simply send the same application for all job vacancies. You need to highlight your strengths and experience for each job announcement within the body of your résumé.

Your application's content is critical. If you neglect to mention key work related experiences and submit all required documentation that is required for the position, you will be rated ineligible. The more effort you put into this process the better off you will be.

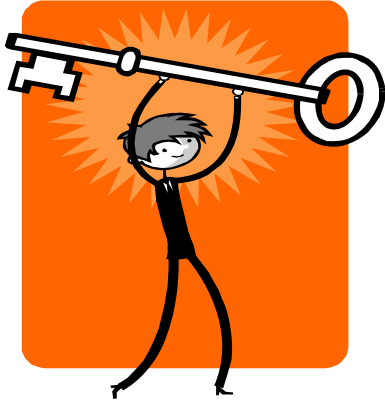
- ✓ Analyze your own experience and qualifications and then relate them directly to the requirements for the job you are applying.
- ✓ Pay careful and painstaking attention when completing your application, especially when completing the experience descriptions.
- ✓ Utilize a concise, well-organized approach, and carefully target job relevant skills and experience.
- ✓ Remember when you submit your résumé, you are marketing your skills, experience, and potential. It is your opportunity to qualify and sell yourself to the selecting official.

What to Include In Your Application:

- ✓ Duties listed on the vacancy announcement are taken directly from the job description for the vacant position. Your résumé should be carefully developed to ensure the description of your skills and experience reflects information pertinent to the position being filled.
- ✓ Utilize the resources directly available to you.
- ✓ Review the major duties in the vacancy announcement (seek common experience and similar experience).

- ✓ Review the examples of qualification experience (look for common and similar experience).
- ✓ Look at the Qualification Standards Handbook (look for examples of similar experiences).
- ✓ The KSAs serve as benchmarks of related experience. Under each KSA question is a series of answer choices. All of which are directly related to the position. (If each choice is a sample and you have that experience, it only makes sense that you include it in your résumé for experience)

This information is what you want to utilize to discern whether you have job related abilities and experience for qualifying. These tools can be extremely beneficial if utilized appropriately.



POWER WORDS

- ability accelerated accomplished achieved addressed administered advised allocated answered appeared applied appointed appraised approved arranged assessed assigned assisted assumed assured audited awarded
- bought briefed broadened brought budgeted built
- capable capability capacity competence competent complete completely consistent contributions cataloged caused changed chaired clarified classified closed collected combined commented communicated compared compiled completed computed conceived concluded conducted conceptualized considered consolidated constructed consulted continued contracted controlled converted coordinated corrected counseled counted created critiqued cut
- dealt decided defined delegated delivered demonstrated developing described designed determined developed devised diagnosed directed discussed distributed documented doubled drafted
- earned edited educated efficient effective effectiveness enlarging equipped excellent exceptional expanding experienced effected eliminated endorsed enlarged enlisted ensured entered established estimated evaluated examined executed expanded expedited experienced experimented explained explored expressed extended
- filed filled financed focused forecast formulated found founded
- gathered generated global graded granted guided
- halved handled helped
- identified implemented improved incorporated increased increasing indexed initiated influenced innovated inspected installed instituted instructed insured interpreted interviewed introduced invented invested investigated involved issued
- joined
- kept knowledgeable
- launched learned leased lectured led licensed listed logged
- made maintained managed matched major mature maturity measured mediated met modified monitored motivated moved
- named nationwide navigated negotiated
- observed opened operated ordered organized outstanding oversaw
- participated perceived performed performance positive potential productive proficient profitable proven persuaded planned prepared presented processed procured programmed prohibited projected promoted proposed provided published purchased pursued
- qualified questioned

● raised ranked rated realized received recommended reconciled recorded record
repeatedly resourceful responsible results recruited redesigned reduced regulated
rehabilitated related reorganized repaired replaced replied reported represented
researched resolved responded restored revamped reviewed revise

● saved scheduled selected served serviced set-up shaped shared showed
significant significantly sound specialist substantial substantially successful stable
simplified sold solved sorted sought sparked specified spoke staffed started streamlined
strengthened stressed stretched structured studied submitted substituted succeeded
suggested summarized superseded supervised surveyed systematized

● tackled targeted taught terminated tested thorough thoroughly took toured traced
tracked traded trained transferred transcribed transformed translated transported
traveled treated trimmed tripled turned tutored

● umpired uncovered understood understudied unified unraveled updated
upgraded used utilized

● verbalized verified versatile vigorous visited

● waged well-educated well-rounded worldwide weighed widened won worked
wrote